

THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU.

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REPORTS

OF

GENERALS STEEDMAN AND FULLERTON

ON THE

Condition of the Freedmen's Bureau

IN THE

SOUTHERN STATES.

Generals Steedman and Fullerton, the Commissioners appointed by the President to investigate the operations of the Freedmen's Bureau in the Southern States, have presented the following report for the States of Virginia and North Carolina:

WILMINGTON, N. C., May 8, 1866.

Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War:

We have the honor to report, in obedience to instructions of April 7 last, directing us to "inspect and report upon the Freedmen's Bureau in the military departments of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas," that we have performed that duty in the departments of Virginia and North Carolina, and submit the following report of our observations. We deem it proper to communicate the result of our inspection in these States before proceeding further in the performance of the duty assigned to us.

It has been our endeavor to ascertain, by a thorough and impartial investigation, the manner in which the Bureau has been administered and conducted in these departments, and to observe the effect produced by it upon the relations between the white and black races. In pursuing our investigations we have endeavored to arrive at the truth, and we feel that we have succeeded in doing so by thoroughly examining and conversing with representatives of all classes of people, white and black, as well as officers on duty in the military service and in the Freedmen's Bureau in said States. We have visited all the cities and towns of any importance, and the headquarters of each district of the Bureau in Virginia and North Carolina, and also have taken advantage of every opportunity to converse with and obtain the opinions with reference to the Bureau of citizens whom we have met on the streets, at the hotels, and while travelling on the cars.

VIRGINIA.

There are on duty in Virginia the following number of officers in the military service and of other persons employed by or attached to the Bureau: One colonel, two lieutenant colonels, three majors, one captain and commissary of subsistence, nine captains and assistant quartermasters, nineteen captains of the line, twenty-three first lieutenants, twenty second lieutenants, two hundred and thirty-three civilian employes, classified and payed as follows:

58 clerks and superintendents of farms, paid average monthly wages.....	\$78	50
12 assistant superintendents, paid average monthly wages.....	87	00
163 laborers, paid average monthly wages.....	11	75

In addition to the foregoing, enlisted men in the military service are employed as orderlies, guards, &c., but we were unable to procure the number of those so employed. Nine thousand freedmen received rations from the Bureau in the month of December last, 10,260 in the month of January, and 9,938 in February. The provision returns on which the rations were issued show:

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
December.....	1,020	2,789	5,191	9,000
January.....	1,215	3,084	5,961	10,260
February.....	1,324	3,147	5,467	9,938

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WHY THE NEGROES NEED ASSISTANCE.

A majority of the freedmen to whom this subsistence has been furnished are undoubtedly able to earn a living if they were removed to localities where labor could be procured. The necessity for issuing rations to this class of persons results from their accumulation in large numbers in certain places where the land is unproductive and the demand for labor is limited. As long as these people remain in the present localities, the civil authorities refuse to provide for the able-bodied, and are unable to care for the helpless and destitute among them, owing to their great number and the fact that very few are residents of the counties in which they have congregated during the war. The necessity for the relief extended to these people, both able-bodied and helpless, by the Government, will continue as long as they remain in their present condition, and while rations are issued to the able-bodied they will not voluntarily change their localities to seek places where they can procure labor.

EVERYTHING DEPENDS UPON THE AGENTS.

In those districts of Virginia where the affairs of the Bureau have been faithfully and impartially administered by men of sound judgment and discretion, there has been no conflict between the agents of the Bureau and the citizens. In all such districts the agents are acting in harmony with the civil officers of the State, and are assisted and supported in the performance of their duties by the citizens. But in many places where the agents are not men of capacity and integrity a very unsatisfactory condition of things exist. This originates in the arbitrary, unnecessary, and offensive interference of the agents of the Bureau with the relations between the planters and their hired freedmen, causing vexatious delays in the prosecution of labor, and imposing expense and costs in suits before themselves of trivial matters that could readily be adjusted by the friendly advice of a sensible man. The effect produced by the action of this class of agents is bitterness and antagonism between the whites and the freedmen, a growing prejudice against the Government among the planters, and expectations on the part of the freedmen that can never be realized. Where there has been no such interference or bad advice given to the freedmen by the agents of the Bureau, there is a growing feeling of kindness between the races, and good order and harmony prevail.

SPECIMEN OF THE DECISIONS OF THE BUREAU.

As an evidence of the manner in which this arbitrary power is exercised, we would state that an agent of the Bureau, presiding in a freedmen's court in Accomac county, decided a question of title to land as follows: A colored man, who was freed twenty years ago by his master, and who was permitted through the kindness of his master to make his home on the plantation wherever he choose, set up a claim to ten acres thereof around a cabin in which he had lived for ten years. The agent decided that the colored man had acquired title to the ten acres by adverse possession, and forbade the owners of the plantation from bringing the question again before his court, or any other court, on pain of imprisonment.

A NEGRO DIVORCE CASE.

These agents exert the widest latitude in the exercise of their judicial functions, trying questions involving title to real estate, contracts, crimes, and even actions affecting the marital relation. We witnessed the trial of a divorce case before the sub-agent at Charlottesville. The trial occupied about ten minutes, and resulted in a decree of divorce.

TRANSFERENCE OF THE POWERS TO THE MILITARY.

The Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for Virginia having turned over to the civil courts all criminal cases in which freedmen are interested, and having made preparations also to turn over civil cases, thus leaves no other duty for the agents of the Bureau to perform except to supervise contracts and to care for the aged, infirm, and helpless. We therefore respectfully recommend that the services of the officers of the Bureau in Virginia be dispensed with, and that their duties be performed by the officers commanding the troops in the department. Such a change would relieve the Government of a large, and, in our opinion, wholly unnecessary expense of supporting a superfluous number of officers and employes, while the duties can be as efficiently and satisfactorily performed in the manner in which we have suggested. As long as the Government of the United States exercises any control whatever over the Southern States not exercised in the other States of the Union, so long the presence of military force will be indispensable. The presence of both the Bureau and military force is unnecessary. The officers commanding the troops can discharge the duties now performed by both; but the officers of the Bureau, without the presence of the troops, would be powerless to execute even their own orders.

PAST SERVICES OF THE BUREAU.

At the close of the war, in the chaotic condition in which society was left in the entire absence of all civil authority, the judicious and sensible officers of the Bureau, supported by the military, exercised a good influence, and did much to preserve order and assist in the organization of free labor. The restoration of civil law, and the recognition of the civil rights of the freedmen, as evidenced by the changes made by the Legislature in the laws of Virginia—giving them the right to hold property, to sue and be sued, and to testify in the courts in all cases in which they may be interested, (a gratifying proof of the growing feeling of kindness toward them on the part of the whites)—render the freedmen, in our opinion, perfectly secure, if left to the care of the law and the protection of the troops.

INFLUENCE ON THE FREEDMEN.

There appears to be a contrariety of opinion as to whether the effect of the operations of the Bureau on the freedmen has been to promote habits of industry or idleness among them. In our judgment the effect produced has depended wholly on the character of the officers. Prudent and industrious freedmen rarely call upon the Bureau for advice or assistance. It is the idle and worthless who look to it for support. Among these, however, we do not mean to include the infirm and helpless. The mass of the freedmen have an idea that the Bureau possesses some mysterious power to serve them, and that if they fail to secure such a livelihood as they desire, they can fall back upon it with a certainty of support. These ideas, it will be readily seen, lessen their efforts to procure employment, and to support themselves and their families. They also regard the existence of the Bureau as evidence that the Government looks upon the white people of the South as their enemies, which is calculated to excite suspicion and bad feeling on their part.

GENERAL BROWN'S ADMINISTRATION.

The Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for Virginia, Brevet Brigadier General O. Brown, is laboring faithfully and zealously to harmonize and protect the interests of both races. We discovered no hostility among the white people of Virginia to the education of the freedmen. In several localities, more especially at Lynchburg and Charlottesville, where we thoroughly examined into this subject, the people were taking much interest in the establishment of schools for their education, giving as a reason for their efforts in this direction that educated labor was preferable to uneducated labor, which sentiment we believe prevails throughout the State.

CONDUCT OF THE OFFICERS.

We made no investigation into the conduct of the officers of the Bureau in Virginia outside of their official duties.

NORTH CAROLINA.

Having completed our duties in Virginia, we proceeded to the Department of North Carolina, and arrived at Raleigh on the 23d of April. Here we saw the Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for said State, Colonel E. Whittlesey, and obtained from him the following information as to the number of military officers and civilians employed, and the number of freedmen to whom rations have been issued since the first of December last in said State:

Commissioned officers in the military service: one colonel, one lieutenant colonel, two majors, seventeen captains, six first lieutenants, eight second lieutenants, one chaplain.

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

9 contract surgeons, at per month.....	\$100	00
26 hospital attendants, at average pay each per month.....	11	25
19 civilian employes, clerks, agents, &c., at an average pay per month of....	77	20
4 laborers, at an average pay per month of.....	11	90

In addition to the foregoing, enlisted men are detailed as orderlies, guards, &c., by commanding officers of the different military posts where officers of the Bureau are serving.

Rations have been issued as follows:

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
December.....	518	2,465	3,679	6,662
January.....	552	2,567	3,712	6,831
February.....	369	2,270	3,507	5,146
March.....	321	2,205	3,406	5,932

The same reasons that exist for issuing rations to the Freedmen of Virginia, and the necessity for the continuance of this relief, apply to Freedmen of North Carolina.

FEELING TOWARDS THE BUREAU.

We found the feeling towards the Bureau much the same as that already stated as prevailing in Virginia, except that there appears to be a more universal desire in this department on the part of all classes to have it removed. This feeling is no doubt attributable to the misconduct of many of the officers of the Bureau, such as working plantations, running saw-mills, manufacturing turpentine and tar, &c., operations which bring them, armed with authority of their official positions, into competition with the citizens who are employing Freedmen.

CONDUCT OF THE AGENTS.

We have investigated some of the charges made against agents of the Bureau, and in pursuing our inquiries on this point, commenced with the Assistant Commissioner of the State, Colonel E. Whittlesey, to whom we addressed the interrogatory: "Do you know of any person in the military service, now on duty with the Freedmen's Bureau in this department, who is, or has been since entering upon the duties of his office, engaged or interested, either directly or indirectly, in the cultivation of any lands within the department?" He answered, "No." Subsequently, he addressed us a note, hereto appended, in which he stated that, in order to assist the planters in hiring Freedmen and trying fairly the experiment of free labor, he and some other officers of the Bureau had loaned money, and thus indirectly had an interest in cultivating farms. On receiving this note, we addressed Colonel Whittlesey further interrogations, a copy of which is hereto annexed, to which he replied in a communication, also hereto appended, disclosing the fact that he is interested as an equal partner with the Rev. Horace James, of Massachusetts, formerly Captain and Acting Quartermaster Freedmen's Bureau, and with Mr. Winthrop Tappan, of Maine, in the cultivation of a large farm in Pitt County, North Carolina. He also stated therein that Captain F. A. Seeley, Superintendent of the Bureau for the Eastern District, North Carolina, is interested in the cultivation of a plantation in Wayne County, North Carolina, with a Mr. Potter, and that Captain Isaac Rosekranz, Commissary of Subsistence, is interested with a Mr. Brooks in the cultivation of a plantation in Pitt County, North Carolina.

A BRIGHT EXCEPTION.

From Raleigh we proceeded to Salisbury, where we found Major Clinton A. Cilley, Superintendent in the Bureau, having Charge of the Western District, embracing fifty-one counties of the State. This efficient and competent officer has administered the affairs of the Bureau within his district with much ability and impartiality. We conferred with the leading white citizens, embracing both those who had formerly been Rebels and those who had been Union men, and also with a delegation of intelligent colored people representing the Freedmen, all of whom agreed in the statement that the Freedmen were at work, were perfectly satisfied, and that good feeling and harmony prevailed between the whites and blacks throughout the district. Major Cilley is not interested in the cultivation of any plantation, or in any other business not directly connected with his official duties, and he has prohibited all officers serving under him within his district from engaging in any enterprise which would enable them to appropriate or control the labor of Freedmen under their jurisdiction to advance their private interests. We attribute much of the order and contentment of the Freedmen in the Western District to Major Cilley's judicious and honest administration.

BACK TO RALEIGH.

After completing our inspection of the operations of the Bureau in Major Cilley's district, we returned to Raleigh, where we remained one day for the purpose of further interview with Colonel Whittlesey; but, he being absent, we were obliged to address him certain interrogatories in writing, to which he afterwards replied as before stated.

AFFAIRS AT NEWBERN.

On the 27th of April we left Raleigh for Newbern, the headquarters of Captain F. A. Seeley, Superintendent of the Bureau of the Eastern District of North Carolina. We at once proceeded to investigate the affairs of the Bureau and the conduct of its officers in this district. Captain Seeley was interrogated as to whether he was interested in any manner, directly or indirectly, in the cultivation of lands, or in any other private business requiring the labor of Freedmen. He answered that he was not,

except indirectly in manufacturing lumber, having purchased, or being about to purchase, with two of his clerks, a saw-mill about forty miles down the river. Dr. Rush, Medical Purveyor, U. S. V., stationed at Newbern, and a Mr. Potter, a citizen, were subsequently examined, both of whom stated that Captain Seeley, Superintendent of the Freedmen's Bureau for the district, entered into partnership with them, about December last, in a contract to cultivate the farm of Mr. George Collier, a citizen of North Carolina, near Goldsborough. They commenced operations by planting seven hundred acres of cotton and some corn, this work necessarily requiring the labor of a large number of Freedmen. Dr. Rush stated that, some two weeks since, he had conditionally purchased the interest of Captain Seeley in his plantation, but had not yet consummated the contract. Mr. Potter stated that about a fortnight ago Dr. Rush, he himself, and others had, conditionally, purchased a part of the interest of Captain Seeley, and that Captain Seeley still owned an interest in the plantation. Without being able to determine from the testimony how far Captain Seeley is interested in this plantation, it is perfectly evident that he prevaricated in his answer to our interrogatory.

FURTHER MISCONDUCT.

Captain Rosekranz, sub-agent of the Bureau at Newbern under Captain Seeley, and commissary of subsistence, as will be seen by reference to the paper hereto attached, is also engaged in cultivating a large plantation near Little Washington, N. C., with the labor of freedmen, whom he supplied with rations as a part of their wages.

MISSING RATIONS.

In one of our interviews with the freedmen at Newbern some of them, who were employed in the Commissary Department of the Bureau, stated that rations in bulk had been frequently taken from the supply warehouse at unusual hours, before the doors were opened for the transaction of business, and hauled off in carts and wagons, and that on one occasion they had followed a cart containing four barrels of pork, to see if it went to the freedmen's ration house. They ascertained that it did not. We investigated this particular case. Captain Rosekranz stated that he knew nothing about it. His brother, a citizen, whom he had employed to act as a commissary sergeant, stated that the four barrels of pork alluded to were ordered by himself, to be taken from the store-house to the building from which rations were issued to the freedmen, but that the driver of the cart had made a mistake and took the pork to the wrong place, a provision store kept by Mr. P. Merwin, and that immediately on discovering the mistake he had it rectified and the pork returned to the store house. Afterwards we called upon Mr. Merwin, who stated that at about the time Mr. Rosekranz said the pork had been sent by mistake to his store he borrowed four barrels of pork from Captain Rosekranz, which he had not yet returned. He also stated that Captain Rosekranz on that day, and after his examination before us, called at his store and requested him to return the four barrels of pork immediately. Mr. Merwin further stated that he had exchanged with Captain Rosekranz two barrels of brown sugar for two barrels of white sugar, and paid Captain Rosekranz five cents per pound for making the exchange.

THE CRUELITIES OF REV. MR. FITZ.

Opposite Newbern, on the south bank of the Trent river, there is a settlement composed exclusively of freedmen, and containing a population of about four thousand, whose condition is truly deplorable. These unfortunate people came within our lines and were located there during the war. They are living in small huts, built by themselves of lumber manufactured by hand; these huts, generally containing but a single room, each of which is occupied, in most cases, by large families. The appearance of this settlement, recently scourged with the small-pox, is well calculated to excite the deepest sympathy for the helpless condition of its inhabitants. The decrepid and helpless among them are supported by the Government of the United States, and the remainder procure an uncertain and scanty living from little jobs about Newbern—from fishing from small boats, huckstering, &c. The Rev. Mr. Fitz, formerly an army chaplain, presides over this colony as assistant superintendent of the Bureau for the Trent river settlement. This agent has exercised the most arbitrary and despotic power, and practiced revolting and unheard-of cruelties on the helpless freedmen under his charge. The outrageous conduct of this man was brought to our attention by a delegation of freedmen from the settlement, who called upon us and made statements in relation to his oppressions and outrages which we could scarcely credit. After hearing their statements we visited the settlement, convened the freedmen, investigating the charges against this man, and ascertained that he had been guilty of even

greater wrongs and oppressions than had been complained of. In addition to the testimony of the freedmen, we took the statements of four intelligent ladies from the North, who are teaching school in the settlement. Among the many acts of cruelty committed by Superintendent Fitz, we found that he had in two instances suspended freedmen with cords around their wrists, their feet not touching the floor, and kept them in this position, in one case four, in the other case six hours; that he sentenced a freedman to an imprisonment of three months for a trivial offence—that of wrangling with his wife. He kept another man, who was arrested for debt, shut up in the black house—the prison—for months, while his wife and children, reduced to abject destitution, died with the small-pox, and took him from the prison under guard and compelled him to bury his last child in the cradle in which it died. On another occasion, when one of his guards reported to him that a colored woman had spoken disrespectfully of him, without even inquiring what the woman had said, he ordered her to be imprisoned until the next morning at nine o'clock, when she would be brought before him to answer for the indignity. In one instance he imprisoned six children for ten days for playing in the streets on the Sabbath day. He imposed a fine of sixty dollars upon an aged freedman for having told another freedman that he was about to be arrested by Mr. Fitz. This poor old man not having the money to pay the fine, was imprisoned until the next day, when his son paid the same, with three dollars additional as jail fees.

FITZ'S TAXES.

The land upon which the huts in this settlement are built is owned by certain heirs in North Carolina, and is held by the Freedmen's Bureau as abandoned property. A tax, which Superintendent Fitz says goes to the support of the Bureau, is imposed upon the owner of each hut for ground rent. If the occupants fail to pay this tax promptly, they are either turned out into the streets or imprisoned, and in some instances huts have been torn down by order of the Superintendent for non-payment of the tax. All business transacted by these people are taxed for the same purpose. Five dollars per month are levied upon every little shop; two dollars on each fishing-boat; five dollars on each horse and cart, &c. The failure to pay those taxes when due at once subjects the property taxed to confiscation. We were unable to obtain what amount of money had been collected by Superintendent Fitz, or what disposition had been made of it. The imperfect manner in which the books were kept would have rendered a lengthy and detailed examination necessary to arrive at even an approximate idea of the amount of money collected. In answer to a question as to what justification there was for the oppressive burdens he had imposed upon these people, Superintendent Fitz replied that Captain Seeley told him, "I must have a thousand dollars a month from that settlement." He also furnished us with a sworn statement, herewith forwarded, marked "E," in which he attempts to defend his conduct by stating that he acted in obedience to the orders of his superior officers in the Bureau.

CAPTAIN SEELEY SCREENING HIS SUBORDINATES.

In an interview we had with Captain Seeley, that officer evinced a desire to shield Superintendent Fitz by stating that a great deal of what was said against him resulted from prejudice, notwithstanding he had the sworn testimony before him that the charges against Fitz were true.

BUREAU OFFICERS SHOOTING DOWN A FREEDMAN.

While at Newbern investigating the conduct of the officers of the Bureau, and the reported oppressions of the freedmen, by this class of persons, our attention was called to the alleged killing of a freedman by a white employé of Colonel Whittlesey, Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for North Carolina, and the Rev. Horace James, formerly assistant quartermaster, on their plantation in Pitt county. Mr. James, while in the United States service, was superintendent of the Bureau for the district now under charge of Captain Seeley, and is now an agent of the Bureau, without pay, for the county in which he is planting. The circumstances under which this freedman was killed, as stated by Mr. James himself, were as follows: The freedman was accused of stealing provisions from the store of Colonel Whittlesey and Mr. James, was arrested, tried, and convicted by Mr. James as agent of the Bureau, and was sentenced to dig ditches on their plantation. While working out this sentence he ran away, and was pursued by James and his clerk, Boyden, who arrived at the bank of a river while the freedman was attempting to cross in a canoe. Boyden ordered him to return, telling him that if he did not he would shoot, and the freedman disregarding this order, Boyden fired. Boyden states himself that he thinks he hit him, and as nothing has

ever been heard of the freedman since, it is generally believed in the neighborhood that he was killed and fell from the canoe into the river. These facts were stated in a letter forwarded to Colonel Whittlesey, who returned it to Captain Seeley with the following endorsement:

RALEIGH, *March 28, 1866.*

Respectfully returned, as the affair seems to have occurred at night, and, as the body of the negro has not been discovered, it does not appear certain that the shot took effect. No further action in the case seems to be called for.

By order of

Colonel WHITTLESEY,
Assistant Commissioner.

BEECHER, *Assistant Adjutant General.*

A number of the freedmen at Newbern expressed dissatisfaction at the manner in which this case had been passed over without investigation; but as the plantation is quite remote from any public line of communication, we were unable, owing to want of time, to inquire into the matter.

AFFAIRS AT KINSTON.

On the 2d instant we left Newbern for Goldsboro, and on the way stopped at Kinston long enough to learn that Crptain Wheeler, agent for the Bureau at that point, is engaged in working a large plantation on his own account, and employs thereon quite a number of freedmen.

MORE FARMING.

At Goldsboro' the superintendent, G. O. Glavis, chaplain United States army, is cultivating one farm on Government account, and is interested in cultivating two farms on his own account. This officer stated in his examination before us that he was not interested in the cultivation of plantations, except indirectly by loaning money to a Mr. Brooks, a friend of his from the North, who was engaged in planting; but we ascertained from Mr. Carr and Mr. Lane, citizens of the vicinity of Goldsboro', that he is interested and joined with them in contracts for the cultivation of their plantations. He and his friend Mr. Brooks entered into a contract with Mr. Lane to furnish rations and pay for forty laborers, and to provide eight good mules. Mr. Lane offered to furnish the land, to superintend in person the cultivation thereof, the crop to be equally divided, one half to Mr. Lane and the other half to Mr. Brooks and Glavis. Mr. Lane states that the enterprise failed after the freedmen had worked over two months; they then left Brooks and Glavis, having failed to pay them according to contract. The Freedmen received for their labor a little clothing, such as coats, pants, shoes, &c., furnished by Captain Glavis, and but little or no money. A similar contract was made by Glavis and Brooks with Mr. Carr, who stated to us that Captain Glavi paying the hands in "a little of everything, but chiefly in clothing."

SELLING FREEDMEN'S CLOTHES.

We ascertained by the testimony of Messrs. Barham & Ballard, Auctioneers at Goldsboro', that they had sold at auction for Chaplain Glavis forty blankets marked "U. S.," and a quantity of clothing that had been sent to Goldsboro' for gratuitous distribution to the needy by a Freedmen's Aid Society at or in the vicinity of Rochester, New York. We learned also that he had disposed of a large amount of such clothing at private sale. The Chaplain stated himself that he had received from such sales two hundred and sixty dollars (\$260,) though subsequently he asserted that the total cash receipts of his office, from all sources, amounted to one hundred and twenty-six dollars and fifty cents (\$126.50.) He kept no books or even memoranda of moneys received or expended.

THE WILMINGTON AGENTS.

On the 4th instant we arrived at Wilmington, the Headquarters of the Bureau for the Southern District of North Carolina, of which Colonel Rutherford is the Superintendent. The Colonel has been here but a short time, and is not yet fully acquainted with the operations of the Bureau in his District. He was so unwell that he was obliged to retire while we were engaged in examining his office, and we have not since conferred with him.

Major J. C. Mann, Assistant Quartermaster and Financial Agent of the Southern District, is engaged in the cultivation of a rice plantation a short distance from Wilmington, on which are employed fifty-five freedmen. The Major stated that while he would not object to making money, he engaged in this business to convince the Southern people that the negro would work.

ONE WAY OF INDUCING INDUSTRY.

Major Charles I. Wickersham, Sub-Agent of the Bureau, whose Headquarters are at Wilmington, is also interested in the cultivation of a rice plantation within his Sub-District, and he is to receive one-fourth of the crops from the same for compelling the freedmen employed on said plantation to work faithfully. He explained the manner in which he compelled freedmen to comply with their contracts, by stating that he put them to work with ball and chain on the streets of Wilmington.

EVILS OF THE SYSTEM.

Without attempting to discuss the propriety of officers of the Bureau in the military service of the United States, who are paid by the Government for the performance of their duties, engaging in private business, and employing freedmen for such purposes, while controlling through their official positions that class of labor, we deem it our duty to state some of the effects produced, both upon the officers themselves and upon the planters with whom they come in competition, by such conduct. Major Wickersham, in contracting to furnish forty labors to work on a rice plantation, becomes at once interested against the laborers, whom he compels to labor, perhaps unjustly, when unfairly dealt with by the person working them on the plantation: and, on their refusing to work, he inflicts upon them unlawful, and, for a breach of contract, unheard of punishment, putting them on chain-gangs, as if they were convicted criminals. Colonel Whittlesey, or any other officer of less rank and influence in the Bureau, who is engaged in working plantations rented for cash or on shares, becomes interested in securing a low rate of wages and in making the most stringent labor regulations, to the great detriment of the freedmen. They thereby give the sanction of the Government to the establishment of wages far below what the labor is really worth. Officers of the Quartermaster's and Commissary Departments who are thus engaged are subjected to the temptation of appropriating to their own use Quartermaster's stores and rations to supply and pay their own laborers. Complaints have been made to me by the planters that these Agents of the Bureau use the power of their positions to obtain and control the best labor in the State. There is no doubt that some of the ill-feeling manifested toward the Bureau on the part of the planters is attributable to this fact.

ARBITRARY POWER OF THE BUREAU.

The arbitrary power exercised by some of the Officers and Agents of the Bureau in making arrests, imposing fines, and inflicting punishments, disregarding the local laws and especially the statute of limitations, creates prejudice against the Government. If the Officers were all honest and intelligent, with even limited legal information, it might be safe to trust them with this extraordinary power: but in many instances the Officers do not possess the slightest knowledge of law. At Goldsboro', the Agent, Captain Glavis, imposed a fine of \$25 on one freedman for stabbing another so severely as to endanger his life, and when interrogated by us relative to this case, he stated that he did not know enough about law to distinguish a civil from a criminal case.

THE RECOMMENDATION.

We are satisfied that the recommendation which we made in reference to the withdrawal of the Officers of the Bureau in Virginia, and the transference to the Officers commanding the troops of such duties as it may still be necessary to perform in connexion with the freedmen, is equally applicable to North Carolina.

Very respectfully, your obedient servants,

JAS. B. STEEDMAN, *Maj. Gen. Volunteers.*

J. S. FULLERTON, *Brig. Gen. Volunteers.*

AUGUSTA, GA., Friday June 1, 1866.

Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War:

SIR: We have the honor to submit the following report of our inspection of the operations of the Freedmen's Bureau in the Military Departments of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, and of the condition of the Freedmen's Settlements, the Sea Islands and Sea-coast, under General Sherman's order:

SOUTH CAROLINA.

We did not visit many of the Bureau Agents in this State, owing to the inaccessibility of their stations; but confined our inspection mainly to districts the headquarters of which are at Columbia, Charleston, and Hamburg. The number of officers and persons employed by and attached to the Bureau in South Carolina, are:

One Brigadier General, Assistant Commissioner of Bureau.

Staff of Assistant Commissioner—One Lieutenant Colonel, one Major, six Captains, one Lieutenant, one Chaplain and Bureau Missionary.

On duty as Sub-Assistant Commissioners of the Bureau—One Colonel, two Lieutenant Colonels, four Majors, seven Captains, six First Lieutenants, one Second Lieutenant.

On Staff Duty Elsewhere than at Bureau Headquarters—Three Lieutenants.

Medical Department—Three Surgeons, United States Volunteers, thirteen Assistant Surgeons.

CITIZEN EMPLOYEES.

Nine clerks, at average pay each per month.....	\$108 33
One rental agent, at monthly pay of.....	75 00
One clerk, at monthly pay of.....	50 00
One storekeeper, at monthly pay of.....	85 00
One counsellor, at monthly pay of.....	125 00
One superintendent of education, at monthly pay of.....	150 00
One printer, at monthly pay of.....	100 00
One contract surgeon, at monthly pay of.....	100 00
Twenty-five laborers, at average pay per month.....	19 20

In the above list of officers in the military service, on duty in the Bureau in South Carolina, brevet rank is omitted, in order that the pay of each may be determined by the rank as there stated.

The number of Freedmen to whom rations have been issued in the Department of South Carolina during each month since the first of December, 1865, is:

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
December.....	2,430	3,612	2,325	8,367
January.....	2,560	3,841	625	7,026
February.....	733	1,876	664	3,273
March.....	816	2,120	1,012	3,948
April.....	894	1,742	1,141	3,777

The number of refugees to whom rations have been issued, is:

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
December.....	7	42	65	114
January.....	7	102	192	301
February.....	30	189	247	466
March.....	24	137	340	531
April.....	48	257	431	746

It will be seen by reference to the above that Brevet Major General Scott, the present Commissioner of the Bureau, upon entering upon the discharge of his duties, greatly reduced the issue of rations to Freedmen. The supplies furnished consisted of pork or bacon, fresh beef, flour or soft bread, hard bread, corn meal, beans, peas and hominy, sugar, vinegar, candles, soap, salt, and pepper. The reduction of the issue of rations by General Scott, since taking charge of the affairs of the Bureau in South Carolina, clearly indicates, in our judgment, that his predecessor, General Saxton, issued a much larger number of rations than would have been required had he pursued the wise policy, since inaugurated by General Scott, of employing proper means to induce the Freedmen to labor, instead of encouraging them to depend on the Government for support. We think there will be no necessity for the issue after the present season, if the policy of General Scott is carried out.

Faithful and efficient agents of the Bureau, who have confined themselves to their legitimate functions, have been aided in the discharge of their duties by the citizens of South Carolina, while incompetent and meddlesome agents, wherever located, have aroused bitter feelings and encountered opposition from the white people.

A very wholesome and acceptable reform in the administration of the Bureau in this Department, and one that will result in a considerable reduction of its expenses, would be to discontinue the citizen agents and instruct the military officers on duty in the State to perform such offices as may be required by the Bureau during its existence.

It is very apparent that such employés as "Bureau Missionary," "Bureau Counselor," "Bureau Printer," and Bureau Storekeeper," can be dispensed with without detriment to either the Government or Freedmen.

COLUMBIA DISTRICT.

The first point in South Carolina where we commenced our investigation was at Columbia. There we found Brevet Brig. Gen. Ely, Sub Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau, who has charge of a district which embraces an indefinite number of counties. We were unable to obtain from him a statement of the extent of territory over which he presided, for the reason that he himself did not know the limits of his jurisdiction. This officer is quite extensively engaged in the cultivation of plantations. His planting interest in the vicinity of Columbia required so much of his time, that, in one instance at least, he found that he had seriously neglected the proper duties of his office. Gen. Ely stated that he was cultivating two plantations on Government account, leased by himself, as Bureau agent, at a cash rent of \$5,000 a year. On three other plantations he stated that he had put freedmen to work and furnished them with Government rations, which were paid for out of their crops. One of these plantations, he afterwards said, had been rented by Wm. Shepley, of the 25th infantry, who had been a clerk in his office. He (Gen. Ely) had put the freedmen to work on the plantation while Shepley was away at his home, and had promised to give them one-half of the crop.

A delegation of freedmen subsequently called on us and stated that in addition to the two plantations which General Ely was cultivating on Government account, he was also planting on his own account the farms of Robert Joiner and A. M. Hunt. This delegation further stated that twenty-nine colored persons, men, women, and children, suffering from the small-pox, were crowded into one room, about twenty feet by twenty-four in size, and placed on the bare floor, with no bedding, while their only covering was the blankets they had brought with them. These poor creatures were left in this condition several days, some of them delirious, with only one black woman to attend them, and without any nourishment but meat and bread. A number of respectable old colored people, attacked with the small-pox, were thus taken from their comfortable homes and placed in this room to die of neglect. One of this delegation assured us that he called to see General Ely on several different days to inform him of the suffering condition of the freedmen in the small-pox hospital, and was told on each occasion that the General could not be seen, as he was absent attending to his plantations. This neglect of duty by General Ely was complained of in a letter written by Beverly Nash, a colored man, and published in a Charleston paper devoted to the interest of the freedmen. After the publication of this letter, General Ely told Nash he did not like to have such statements made about him, and wished the freedmen to get up some resolutions denying the truth of the allegations preferred, which they refused to do.

We examined a contract between a planter and freedman, which is on file in General Ely's office, and herewith forwarded. If this contract is to be regarded as evidence of the condition of the freedmen under charge of General Ely, they are certainly very little better off than they were while in slavery. The system of labor established by this contract is at best a system of peonage.

CHARLESTON DISTRICT.

From Columbia we proceeded to Charleston, the headquarters of the Bureau for South Carolina, where we met Brigadier General R. K. Scott, the Assistant Commissioner. We found him to be an energetic and competent officer, laboring to correct the mistakes and blunders of his predecessors. Although he has been on duty but a short time, he has produced a marked change for the better in the administration of affairs of the Bureau. We called at his office for the purpose of examining the records of the Bureau, but we were informed that all the books, papers, records, and documents pertaining to the affairs of the freedmen from the establishment of the Bureau, and all records relating to the administration of the Bureau in South Carolina from its organization to the time of General Scott's assuming charge of affairs, had been carried off by General Saxton, and that he had left only a file of his own general orders in the office. General Saxton gave as a reason for this proceeding that it was necessary for him to have the books and records "to make him all right at Washington." In the absence of official documents we were unable to institute any close examination into the conduct of the officers of the Bureau who had been on duty in South Carolina previous to General Scott's administration, and we could only judge of their conduct by the condition in which we found the freedmen in those places where the policy of General Saxton had been fully carried out, and where its effects were still apparent. Reasoning from these data, we are convinced that the operation of the Bureau on the freedmen

in respect to their habits and desposition to labor and support themselves, under the administration of General Saxton, was exceedingly pernicious, especially on the Sea Island, to which we will allude further in our account of the freedmen's settlements thereon, on the seaboard.

Chaplain M. French, United States colored troops, Bureau missionary and superintendent of marriage relations, and Lieut. L. J. Lott, sub-assistant commissioner, having charge of a freedmen's camp at Charleston, are in partnership with Wm. Hanehan, of Charleston, in cultivating a plantation on Edisto Island. They furnished \$1,500 in money to carry on the plantation, and are to receive half the net profit of the undertaking. They purchase supplies in Charleston, and forward them to the plantation. Chaplain French explained to us that, in making the agreement with Wm. Hanehan, he was actuated solely by a desire to assist him to furnish labor for the poor freedmen; but with even an ordinary crop, he will not receive less than 250 or 300 per cent. on the money advanced.

When we called the attention of Gen. Scott to the planting operations of Gen. Ely, Chaplain French, and Lieut. Lott, he evinced his disapproval of this action of these officers.

Under the guidance of Gen. Scott, the condition of the freedmen in Charleston has been very much improved, and the bad feeling which had grown up between the whites and blacks under the former administration is gradually wearing away. Most of the freedmen are now at work and receive good wages.

We visited the Edgefield Court-House, now the centre of the district of which Lieutenant Colonel Devereaux has charge, the headquarters of which are at Hamburg, on the Savannah river, opposite the city of Augusta, Ga. There have been a number of brutal outrages committed in this district on the freedmen, by a band of outlaws, who, through the apparent neglect of the agent of the Bureau, or the inability or the unwillingness of the citizens to bring them to justice, have escaped punishment, and are still at large. A number of intelligent and influential citizens in Edgefield, in conversation with us, strongly condemned the conduct of the villians who had murdered unoffending freedmen. These citizens stated that the murders were committed by a band of men from the States of Texas, Kentucky, and Tennessee, who had been in the rebel army, and were prevented by their crimes from returning to their respective homes, and who had taken to the road for a livelihood, and were stealing horses from white people, and robbing and murdering colored men because they were defenceless. We asked the citizens why they were not arrested by the civil authorities. Their reply was that they were in doubt as to their authority to act—that the Freedmen's Bureau, with the military support, was the superior power, claiming exclusive authority to arrest and punish persons committing outrages on freedmen, and that as long as this state of things existed they were powerless to punish crimes of this character. They evinced much indignation at what they termed the injustice of a portion of the press in holding them accountable for crimes and barbarities which they said were as revolting to them as to any other portion of the American people, while the power to punish the perpetrators was withheld from them. They also assured us with unanimity that hereafter, although their civil government was still partially paralyzed, every effort would be made to punish all persons guilty of committing outrages on freedmen.

We learned that six or seven freedmen had been murdered by the band of outlaws referred to, during the months of March and April, and, although a month had elapsed since the last of these crimes was committed, and action had been taken by General Sickles, the investigation of the same was commenced by the Bureau agent only a few days since, and is now progressing at Hamburg, thirty miles from the scene of the murders. We earnestly hope that these murderers may be brought to justice.

SEA ISLANDS.

On the 13th of May we left Charleston by steamer, and visited first the Sea Islands on the coast of South Carolina, which have been, and still are, with the islands on the coast of Georgia, under the exclusive control of the Bureau. There are on these islands one hundred and forty-one valid possessory titles to land held by freedmen, under the order of General Sherman. They encumber thirty-two plantations, situated on James, Johns, Wadmalan, and Edisto islands. The number of freedmen now on all the South Carolina islands is about thirty thousand. They form, however, but a small proportion of the aggregate number who have occupied the islands since General Sherman's order was issued; many of those who first came here remained on the island but a short time, and then returned to their homes on the main land. Others who made small crops gathered them in, and left to seek more profitable employment. A

large majority of the freedmen who still remain on the islands are in destitute circumstances. On Wadmalan and Edisto islands, many who are cultivating lands for themselves would be compelled to abandon their crops were it not for the provisions furnished by the planters. Last season Government rations and clothing were furnished to most of the freedmen, who were working on their own account, with the agreement that they should afterward pay for these supplies furnished out of the proceeds of their crops, but none of the outlays thus incurred have been repaid. We found, on inquiry, that some of the freedmen raised good crops, and could easily have reimbursed the Government for the supplies provided for them, but most of them were swindled out of all they made by a gang of white sharpers who, pretending to be their friends, gained permission to come upon the islands and set up stores, provided with sweetmeats, cheap jewelry, and worthless articles of dress, with which they plundered these poor creatures of their hard earnings. The same class of persons who thus defrauded the freedmen last year have made extensive preparations to secure this season's crop by the same means. We found a number of their stores on Edisto and Wadmalan islands, and will mention one case where one of them is connected with a plantation as an example. This store is on a farm rented and cultivated by a Mr. Underwood, of Boston, Massachusetts. Accompanied by General Scott, we stopped on the plantation and investigated the condition of the freedmen thereon working by the "task," which is precisely the same manner in which their former owners worked them. The price per task is fifty cents, which, if paid in money or its equivalent, would be fair wages; but, in lieu of money, tickets were given them, on which was printed "Good for — in provisions at our store." These tickets were taken up by the storekeeper, with corn at \$3 per bushel, and other articles at similarly exorbitant prices. There was no meat in the shop. The freed people gathered around us while we were there, and complained bitterly of their treatment, stating that with the wages paid them they were unable to earn enough to buy, at the prices charged, their necessary subsistence. If these freedmen were paid in money for their labor they could escape the extortions of the shopkeeper, but with the tickets issued to them they are compelled to pay the prices charged and take whatever the storekeeper sees fit to give them. Competition, which would greatly reduce the price of provisions, is prevented, at least on this plantation, by military orders. Mr. Tolls, on an adjacent plantation, was selling corn to these people at \$2 per bushel, and taking Underwood tickets in payment, but he was compelled to desist by special order.

Major J. E. Edwards, sub-assistant commissioner for the islands, stated that his attention had been called to some difficulty among the freedmen on Underwood's plantation, which he had investigated and found the freedmen in fault. He, therefore, required the freedmen to resume work, and notified them that if they did not do so he would arrest them. An examination led us to a different conclusion from that arrived at by Major Edwards. In our opinion the condition and treatment of the freedmen on Underwood's plantation fully justified them in refusing to work.

Near the plantation rented and worked by Mr. Underwood is one owned by Mr. Jenkins, on which an opposite mode of treatment is pursued. The freed people here were working three days out of the week for wages—fifty cents a task, paid in corn at two dollars per bushel, and bacon at twenty-five cents per pound—and during the remainder of the week they were allowed to cultivate for themselves as much as they could manage, the land being given them by Mr. Jenkins free of rent.

On the Baynord plantation, on Edisto Island, the following circumstances were brought to our knowledge: This farm was being cultivated by freedmen on their own account, partly under their land grants, and partly without. On the 12th of May last, when the crops had all been planted and the cotton was being hoed, a man from New York named Holton came on the farm with a squad of colored soldiers under charge of a sergeant, and compelled the freedmen to contract with him to cultivate the land for his benefit. What the exact terms of this contract were none of the freedmen knew. Some believed that they were to get a third of the crop, while others stated that they were to receive only one fourth, and were to pay \$5 each month for the rent of their cabins. Mr. Holton was not on the plantation at the time of our visit, and we were consequently unable to ascertain the true nature of the contract, no copy of it having been left with the freedmen. We called the attention of the assistant commissioner to the complaints of the freedmen on this plantation.

Chaplain French, Bureau missionary, and Rev. C. Brodwell, (colored,) Edisto Island, stated to us that a similar occurrence had taken place on the plantation rented by a gentleman recently mustered out of the United States service, when the freedmen, after planting their crops, had been dispossessed and forcibly compelled to sign a contract, a squad of colored soldiers having been used for that purpose.

While on Edisto Island, we visited Mr. Edding's plantation, which is being cultivated by freedmen exclusively, working under the direction of one of their own number, a superintendent chosen by themselves. Here the people are apparently doing well, and have a fair prospect of a good crop. This, however, is almost the only instance we met with on any of the islands where the freedmen, cultivating exclusively for themselves, without the direction of whites, were doing even tolerably well.

We visited other plantations besides those named above on Edisto and Wadmalan, but mention these only as a fair index of the condition of things generally on those islands.

There are no land grants under General Sherman's order on Port Royal Island; but the freed people hold and are cultivating a considerable portion of this island under tax titles. Some of them made their third crop, last season on these lands; but, notwithstanding the advantage thus enjoyed, they are nearly all of them now in destitute circumstances. Their present impoverished condition is attributed to the fact that their crops were purchased by Beaufort storekeepers and others at merely nominal rates, in most instances at less than at a fourth of their real value. These thrifty traders, many of whom made their advent in Beaufort with the army, purchased the Sea Island cotton of the freedmen at ten cents per pound in the seed, and have this season already secured mortgages to a large proportion of the freedmen's crop, in some instances even on their lands.

GEORGIA.

SAVANNAH, GA., AND THE ISLANDS.

After visiting the South Carolina islands we proceeded to Savannah, Georgia, where we were joined by Brevet Major General David Tilson, assistant commissioner of the Bureau for Georgia. He accompanied us on our visit to the Sea Islands under his charge. Our first investigation was on St. Catherine's Island. There has been much confusion and disorder here, occasioned by Rev. Tunis J. Campbell, a colored man from Nova Scotia, who was located on the island by General Saxton as an agent of the Bureau. This man abolished all the simple rules and regulations adopted by the freedmen for their own guidance, and established instead a parody of the United States Government, putting himself in the position of President, and assuming in addition dictatorial powers. Under his administration the freedmen were armed, no white man was allowed to land on the island, and every effort was made to stir up feelings of animosity against the white race. Among other powers assumed by Campbell, he issued land grants, claiming to do so "by virtue of the authority vested in him by the President of the United States and General Saxton," and took especial care to bestow the best allotments on himself and relations.

The conduct of this man had a most prejudicial influence on the freedmen, and placed them for a time entirely beyond the control of the assistant commissioner for Georgia. On his first visit to the island General Tillson discovered that prompt intervention was necessary for the interests of the freedmen themselves, as their lands were being uncultivated, and they were not far removed from absolute want. With much difficulty he obtained a hearing from them, and succeeded in restoring order and getting them to work, and abolishing the absurd form of government established by Campbell. General Tillson ascertained that of the whole number of land grants on the island, seventeen only were valid. These grants covered 515 acres, and were scattered all over the island. He consolidated them so as to occupy one section of the island only, leaving the remainder for cultivation by the proper owners. There are at present 625 freedmen on this island; of these 147 are working for Messrs. Winchester & Schuyler, of New York, who have rented a part of the Ordbury plantation, and the remainder are cultivating land on their own account. The 147 freedmen working for Winchester & Schuyler have planted 350 acres of cotton and 115 of corn; the 475 freedmen working for themselves have planted 200 acres of cotton and 200 acres of corn.

From St. Catharine's we went to Sapelo Island, which is cultivated exclusively by Messrs. Dickson & McBride. The Freedmen here are working the land for two-thirds of the crop, and, so far as we could perceive, were well treated and cared for, and will make money if they can be protected from the bad influence of a bad man named —, who came among them last year with a permit from Captain Ketchum, Bureau Agent under General Saxton, bought their cotton at ten cents per pound in the seed, and paid them mainly in whiskey. This vicious man has exerted such an evil influence over these Freedmen as to make them dissatisfied with an exceedingly liberal contract.

On St. Simon's Island there are eighteen valid land grants encumbering four plantations. There are between five and six hundred Freedmen on the Island, most of whom are working for wages, are well fed, and appear to be perfectly contented. On two of the plantations they were working without formal contracts, but we are assured by the

Bureau Agent that these Freedmen relied confidently on being fairly dealt with by their employers. Our visit to this Island satisfied us that the Freedmen there were doing exceedingly well.

OGEECHEE RIVER SETTLEMENT.

This settlement, embracing originally several hundred freed people, the largest colony on the coast under General Sherman's order, was last year under the control of Rev. Mr. Tiffany, an agent of the Bureau, appointed to that position by General Saxton. If the records kept by General Saxton were within our reach, we could, without doubt, obtain official information as to the workings of this settlement, but, in the absence of the records, we can only report such facts as are within the knowledge of General Tillson and other officers on duty in the Department.

On taking charge of this settlement, Mr. Tiffany hired twenty-five Freedmen as a guard, armed with United States muskets, and used them to prevent any white man entering the settlement. Seven United States officers, who had not Mr. Tiffany's pass, were halted and refused the use of the Government boat to cross the Ogeechee river. This guard of twenty-five men, who served the entire season, were to be paid out of the proceeds of the Rice Crop raised by Freedmen of the settlement. Mr. Tiffany gave them certificates for the amount due them, which certificates they still hold, but are unable to get either rice or money.

All the freed people of this colony were supplied through the season with Government rations, which were to be paid for out of their crops. We were informed by the Bureau Officers of the Department that none of these rations have ever been repaid. A very considerable crop of rice was made by the Freedmen, and Mr. Tiffany, the agent, advertised sixty thousand bushels of it for sale. General Tillson, who had in the *interim* assumed charge of the Bureau in Georgia, seeing the advertisement, ordered the sale to be suspended, and notified Tiffany that only bonded officers were authorized to sell Government property. What disposition was eventually made of the Rice Crop, or who received the profits of it, we were unable to ascertain. Mr. Tiffany shortly after this retired, whether voluntarily or otherwise, can only be determined by the records, which are not within our reach. Most of the freed people of the settlement became disheartened, and, voluntarily abandoning their land grants, are now working under contract for the former owners of the land, or the persons who have rented plantations from land owners.

We have mentioned these particular cases as indicating the condition of the Freedmen occupying the Sea Islands and the Coast under General Sherman's order. Our personal observations, the evidence we have taken, and the inquiries we have been obliged to make to supply the place of records, have convinced us that the condition of the Freedmen of these settlements, while in charge of General Saxton, was such as to give but little hope that, under the policy pursued by that officer, they would ever become self-supporting, even with the fertile lands on which they are located placed at their disposal free from rent and taxes. The failure of General Saxton's administration resulted from a variety of causes, among which may be enumerated:

The unnecessary continuance of Government support to the Freedmen, which tended to increase their natural improvidence and to encourage habits of idleness.

Keeping them under such guardianship and tutelage that they were disinclined to make proper exertions for their own support or improvement.

Teaching them to distrust all white men but those who had immediate authority over them, or who came among them with passes from the Bureau, thus preparing them to fall an easy prey to the sharpers who afterwards obtained access to them under the guise of friendship, taking advantage of their credulity, and fraudulently appropriating their crops.

Their inexperience in providing for their own support, and in managing business for themselves.

It is not in the power of Generals Tillson or Scott, until a crop has been raised under their respective administrations, to materially improve the condition of the freedmen on the Sea Islands. Although these officers have effected salutary reforms in the conditions of the blacks, and their disposition to labor, and have been instrumental in removing from their minds many of the absurd ideas which had been instilled among them, idleness, discord, and bitter prejudices against the white people still exist. The extent to which they were deluded by the few white men who had intercourse with them is almost incredible. Among the evidence taken in reference to their condition, and which bears directly on this point, is the statement of a distinguished general officer, who was in command of a district embracing part of the Islands, as follows:

"I assumed command in January, 1865, of a district in which the South Carolina Sea Islands were included. They were then in a state of turmoil and confusion,

amounting to almost open rebellion. Armed patrols were maintained on the Island to prevent any white man from landing. Several gentlemen from Pennsylvania who attempted to land (improperly, I must say) were arrested by the freedmen. I had placed a guard on each wharf to prevent their being molested, but they chose to make a landing on a part of the Island where no guard was stationed. The negroes had been told and believed that a large force of rebel cavalry still occupied the woods on the mainland. Utter lawlessness prevailed, and cattle-stealing raids on the mainland by the negroes were of frequent occurrence. I went over and broke up their military bands, and told them the war was over. I then went to work to organize a system of labor. I found the 40-acre allotments under General Sherman's order of most elastic dimensions. The largest I saw was 350 acres, and the smallest 312 acres. Many freedmen who had land orders for John's Island had settled on James Island, and certificates for Edisto Island were plentiful on Wadmalan Island. Scarcely any attempt had been made to cultivate the land. There were not more than two acres 'listed out' in any one path on Edisto Island. I had to discontinue the issue of rations before I could get them to work at all. I had nearly succeeded in getting them to work when the bill securing their land titles passed Congress, and everything was again thrown into confusion. Matters are now, however, getting straight again."

An impartial comparison of the comparative condition of the freedmen on the South Carolina Islands and those in Florida and Southwest Georgia clearly demonstrates that the freed people who have remained on the plantations, and have been aided by the advice of sensible and practical military and Bureau officers, are infinitely better off than those who have been assisted with rations and clothing by the Government.

In our opinion, the most equitable solution of the question of the occupation of the Sea Islands and the coast under Gen. Sherman's order will be to surrender the lands to the former owners, on the 1st day of January next, requiring the land owners to pay to the freedmen the value in money of all improvements made by them while occupying the land—this to be determined by a commission appointed by the Government. Of course we do not mean by this to interfere with any of the freedmen who may desire to surrender the lands they are now occupying at any time before that date, by arrangement between themselves and the owners of the land. Generals Tillson and Scott both concur with us that this arrangement will give general satisfaction to both the freedmen and landowners. Should the recommendation be adopted by the Government, we respectfully suggest that the order be issued before the 1st of September next, so as to give both parties ample time to make arrangements for the next season's planting.

FLORIDA.

After completing our investigation of the Sea Islands, we went to Fernandina, Fla. Here we found Captain Leddy, of the Volunteer Reserve Corps, on duty as agent of the Bureau, having charge of a district embracing two counties, containing 1,000 freedmen. These are generally at work lumbering and get from \$20 to \$26 per month as wages. Captain Leddy is assisted by Major Schrearer, formerly an officer of the 7th Ohio infantry, who acts as an agent without pay, but is partially compensated by receiving \$5 fee for each contract drawn up and approved. Captain Leddy is a good, judicious man, who, by friendly interference and good advice, has settled most of the difficulties which have arisen in his district between the freedmen themselves, and between the whites and freedmen, without litigation.

We next visited Jacksonville, the headquarters of Captain Webster, who has charge of several counties, in which freed people are generally at work and are liberally compensated.

There had been at this place, a few days before our visit, much bad feeling between the white and colored people, produced by irritating false reports circulated by vicious persons, but, through the efforts of the Governor of the State, the Department Commandant, and the officers of the Bureau, harmony and mutual confidence had been restored.

We next visited Tallahassee, the headquarters of the Department Commandant and the Assistant Commissioner of the Bureau for the State, from whom we obtained the following statistics;

- 1 major, brevet colonel, assistant commissioner.
- 1 major, staff duty.
- 3 captains, staff duty.
- 5 captains, sub-assistant commissioners.
- 3 first lieutenants, sub-assistant commissioners.
- 5 second lieutenants, sub-assistant commissioners.

6 citizens agents and subordinate commissioners, at average pay per month, \$125.

1 assistant superintendent of education; pay per month, \$100.

1 contract surgeon; pay per month, \$100.

4 clerks: average pay per month, \$88 50.

8 nurses for hospital and 1 messenger; average pay per month, \$14 30.

In giving the rank of the officers on duty in the Bureau, the brevet rank is omitted, in order that the rank may indicate the amount of pay drawn by each.

The number of rations issued by the officers of the Bureau, or by post commander, on request of the assistant commissioner of the Bureau, in the State of Florida, since the 1st of December, 1865, to the 1st of May, 1866, were 12,716, valued at \$2,023,25. The average monthly issue amounted to 2,543. Among the number who have been receiving rations were the inmates of the Orphan Asylum, located at Fernandina, which is under the charge of the National Freedmen's Aid Association, and the inmates of the Freedmen's Hospital, at Magnolia, which is controlled by the Bureau.

The assistant commissioner stated that rations have been issued only to the inmates of the Asylum and Hospital, and in some isolated cases, when the circumstances of the freedmen show actual destitution and inability to provide for themselves and families. Some of the rations have been issued upon returns signed by me, by post commanders not connected with the Bureau, consequently I have not the data from which to report the number, age, and the sex of those who have received rations.

Brevet Col. T. W. Osborne, the assistant commissioner of the Bureau for Florida, is an intelligent and just man, and an energetic and impartial officer. The most favorable accounts were given us by citizens, by the military and Bureau officers, and by the freed people, of the good condition of the freedmen in this department, as well as of the encouraging prospects of the crops which they are cultivating.

After leaving Tallahassee, the next point at which we stopped was Monticello, where there are several plantations, on which a large number of freedmen are employed working for one-third of the crops. Both planters and freedmen are satisfied, and all bear testimony to the wisdom and justice of the administration of the Bureau by Col. Osborne.

Throughout the entire State the military, the Bureau, and the civil authorities are generally acting in harmony, which, in our opinion, is the main reason why the freedmen are more quiet, orderly, and thrifty here than they are in localities in which there is antagonism between these powers. The only exceptions to this state of things in Florida is at Jacksonville, the cause of which has already been stated.

Very respectfully, your obedient servants,

JAMES B. STEEDMAN, *Major General.*

J. S. FULLERTON, *Brevet Brig. General.*